



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Kansas

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TOPEKA, KANSAS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO DISTRIBUTE METHAMPHETAMINE

TOPEKA, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Jose Rafael Rodriguez, 26, Topeka, Kansas, entered a guilty plea today before U.S. District Judge Julie A. Robinson to one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.**

Melgren said that Rodriguez admitted at his plea that from July 25, 2002, to October 1, 2002, he sold a total of approximately 524.8 grams (approximately 1.16 pounds) of methamphetamine on seven different occasions to an individual who was working as a confidential informant with the Drug Enforcement Administration. Rodriguez further admitted that he obtained the methamphetamine from co-defendant Rafael Mercado, Jr.

Rodriguez faces a minimum of five years and a maximum of forty years in federal prison without parole. Sentencing is set for October 14, 2003, at 9:00 a.m.

Co-defendant Rafael Mercado, Jr., was sentenced on May 16, 2003, to 70 months in federal prison, without parole, to be followed by three years of supervised release. Mercado entered a guilty plea on February 3, 2003, to one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

Melgren commended the excellent work of the Topeka Police Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney James Brown in this prosecution.